CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 25 MARCH 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT MADE BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON 18 MARCH 1999 IN CONNECTION WITH THE ADOPTION BY THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OF A BILL ON DEPLOYMENT OF A NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENCE SYSTEM

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement made by the official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia on 18 March 1999 in connection with the adoption by the Senate of the United States of America of a bill on the deployment of a national missile defence system.

I should be grateful if this statement could be published as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to delegations of all States Members of the Conference and all non-member States which are participating in the work of the Conference.

[Signed]

Vasily SIDOROV
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of
Russia to the Conference on Disarmament

STATEMENT BY THE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF RUSSIA

According to information to hand, the Senate of the United States of America has adopted a bill on deployment of a national missile defence system, i.e. an ABM system for the territory of the country. As is well known, deployment of such a system is prohibited by the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, 1972.

The bill calls on the American Administration to elevate the establishment of a national ABM system to the level of United States policy, and to begin its deployment as soon as is technologically possible.

Although Washington persistently emphasizes that no decision concerning deployment of such a system will be taken before the year 2000, the direction in which the American Senate is now moving is in point of fact towards the wrecking of the ABM Treaty, and with it the entire structure of agreements on the reduction of strategic offensive arms. The ABM Treaty and the START Treaties are, as it were, component parts of a single whole. It is no coincidence that the interrelationship between the preservation of this Treaty and the possibility of reducing strategic offensive arms is clearly expressed both in the ABM Treaty itself and in the START-I and START-II Treaties.

That is why, in accordance with the Statement made upon signature of the START-I Treaty, for the Russian side the extraordinary events that would permit it to withdraw from this Treaty also include a situation related to withdrawal of the United States from the ABM Treaty, or related to material breach of that Treaty.

It is, therefore, a question, as we see it, of a serious threat to the whole nuclear arms limitation process, as well as to the stability of a strategic situation that decades of elaboration of major international agreements have been designed to strengthen.

18 March 1999